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2025-2026 Phase Two: The Needs Assessment for Schools

West Hardin Middle School
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2025-2026 Phase Two: The Needs Assessment for Schools
Understanding Continuous Improvement: The Needs Assessment for Schools

The Needs Assessment Diagnostic will facilitate the use of multiple sources of data to determine the current reality and establish a foundation for decision-making around school goals and strategies. Once completed, the diagnostic will lead to priorities to be addressed in the comprehensive school improvement plan to build staff capacity and increase student achievement. The needs assessment is to be conducted annually as an essential part of the continuous improvement process and precedes the development of strategic goals (i.e. desired state).

While the focus of continuous improvement is student performance, the work must be guided by the aspects of teaching and learning that affect performance. An effective improvement process should address the contributing factors creating the learning environment (inputs) and the performance data (outcomes).

The needs assessment provides the framework for all schools to clearly and honestly identify their most critical areas for improvement that they will address later in the planning process through the development of goals, objectives, strategies and activities. 703 KAR 2:225 requires, as part of continuous improvement planning for schools, each school to complete the needs assessment between October 1 and November 1 of each year and include: (1) a description of the data reviewed and the process used to develop the needs assessment; (2) a review of the previous plan and its implementation to inform development of the new plan; and, (3) perception data gathered from the administration of a valid and reliable measure of teaching and learning conditions.

Protocol

1. Clearly detail the process used to determine the priorities of this year's needs assessment. Include the following information in your response:

- • names of school council members, leadership teams and stakeholder groups (i.e., Family Resource Youth Service Centers, community partners such as civic and business organizations, etc.) involved in the process
- • a timeline of the process
- • the specific data reviewed and analyzed
- • how and where the meetings were documented.

West Hardin is comprised of various stakeholders who are committed to continuous review, analysis, and discussion of multiple types of data. These stakeholders also prioritize developing plans for ongoing improvement in all areas, including academic achievement and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for academics and behavior.

School administration—consisting of the principal, assistant principals, and counselors—receives school-level data first and initiates the analysis process. This team collaborates weekly and monthly to assess current status and trends. More detailed analysis is conducted by staff in departmental groups, grade-level teams,

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and whole-group settings. Throughout the year, various data sources are examined, including state assessments, benchmark diagnostic assessments, multiple universal screeners, student survey data, behavior screeners, MTSS progress, attendance, Studer survey results, and anecdotal observations.

i-Ready data, including My Path Individualized Instruction, is reviewed monthly. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are scheduled biweekly to analyze formative and summative classroom data. Pull-out intervention classes are embedded in the school-wide schedule to support students with skill deficits in reading and math. The MTSS Committee—comprised of intervention teachers and administration (principal and counselors)—meets monthly to review student progress. Special education teachers conduct weekly progress monitoring for students on their caseloads.

After each benchmark assessment—administered in August, December, and April—a thorough, schoolwide data analysis is conducted. These checkpoints allow teams to evaluate progress, identify trends, and adjust instruction and interventions accordingly.

To ensure individualized support, the principal meets with each teacher to review fall i-Ready data and the previous year's KSA results. Each math and reading teacher receives a data spreadsheet for their classes, which they use to track student growth throughout the year. Teachers and the administration team also meet with students to set personalized goals for future i-Ready and KSA assessments. Through PLCs, student data is continuously monitored, and intervention plans are developed for those in need. All documentation is maintained in a shared Google Drive folder accessible to all teams.

Data is also shared with stakeholders outside the school through family data nights, where students lead conferences with their families to discuss KSA and i-Ready performance. Additionally, data is presented during public meetings such as the School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) Council and Board of Education sessions.

West Hardin's SBDM Council meets monthly and plays a vital role in guiding school improvement efforts. Current SBDM members include Candace Perry, Sarah Sams, Amelia Tarrence, Kayla Honaker, Stephanie Brothers, and Christin Swords. All SBDM agendas, minutes, policies, and bylaws are available on the school website and can also be requested in hardcopy from the school office manager.

Review of Previous Plan

2. Summarize the implementation of the goals, objectives, strategies and activities from the previous year's comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP). What was successful? How will your results inform this year's plan?

Goal One: Proficiency Indicator: In reading, the goal was to move from 47% to 57% scoring proficient/distinguished and we increased to 49%. In math, the goal was to move from 42% to 50% scoring proficient/distinguished and we dropped to 41%. We will continue to monitor our diagnostic IReady results three times a year as well as IReady growth. We will meet with teachers during PLC time to analyze individual

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student data. The pull out intervention classes are working well as evidenced by student growth so we will continue to use allocations for those teaching positions. Resources and processes for the math intervention classes will be analyzed to determine change that is needed.

Goal Two: Separate Academic Indicator--In science, the goal was to move from 32% to 40% scoring proficient/distinguished and we had 24% scoring proficient/distinguished. In social studies, the goal was to move from 46% to 52% scoring proficient/distinguished and we dropped to 34% scoring P/D. In writing, the goal was to move from 55% to 58% scoring proficient/ distinguished and we had 44% scoring proficient/ distinguished. Upon review of these goals, the committee determined that several objectives would need to be modified to reflect current scores in science, social studies and writing. We will continue a focus on ensuring congruency is present between standards, objectives, & assessments. We will use PLC agendas, state assessment vertical curriculum mapping to identify curriculum gaps. Our three-year goals will need revised in Science, Social Studies and Writing given this information.

Goal Three: Achievement Gap--Upon review of the achievement gap goal, the committee decided to change the goal to reduce novice instead of increasing proficiency. Activities were also reviewed and the committee chose to keep co-teaching and add a new goal focused on students with disabilities and their accommodations.

Effective PLCs continue to be a cornerstone of our instructional improvement efforts, providing structured time for teams to review data, adjust curriculum, and refine instructional practices. Across the district, PLCs are actively engaged in developing standards-based assessments and activities, aligning curriculum, and responding to student needs through data-informed decisions.

Now in our second year of implementing a new curriculum, we've prioritized the development of more thorough and standards-based common assessments. These assessments are housed within the Pear Assessment platform, which has significantly enhanced our ability to analyze data. Pear allows for streamlined sorting and disaggregation of student performance data by class, student ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, and special education populations—ensuring that our instructional adjustments are both targeted and inclusive.

As data is analyzed, instructional teams make timely adjustments to address gaps and accelerate growth. This process is ongoing. We remain committed to using these tools and structures to focus on our subgroups performing below their peer group ensuring that every student receives the support they need.

Trends

3. After analyzing data trends from the previous two academic years, which academic, cultural and behavioral measures remain significant areas for improvement?

Example of Trends

• Behavior remains an area for improvement, as referrals have increased in the last two years from 204 in 2023-2024 to 288 in 2024-2025.

• Reading for students in our gap groups remains an area for improvement because the district saw an 11% increase in novice scores in reading among students with achievement gaps from 2024-2025.

The total number of behavior referrals decreased from 1,388 in 2021-22 to 989 in 2022-23. In 2023-24, we had 631 referrals spread across 158 students, a 36% decrease from the previous year and a 54.5% decrease from 2022-23. In 2024-25, there were 485 referrals among 123 students, reflecting a 23% decrease from last year and a 51% decrease since 2022-23. This trend suggests that our PBIS work, as well as our interventions and supports, have been increasingly effective in reducing incidents that result in referrals, even when adjusting for enrollment changes.

The total number of suspensions has remained relatively steady over the past three years. In 2022-23, there were 64 suspensions involving 47 students. In 2023-24, there were 63 suspensions among 48 students, essentially unchanged from the previous year. In 2024-25, 66 suspensions involved 44 students, representing a slight increase in suspensions but decrease in students from the previous year.

The overall mean score on the Employee Engagement Survey has remained relatively stable over the past three years, with scores of 4.28 in 2022–23, 4.23 in 2023–24, and returning to 4.28 in 2024–25. The lowest scoring area being "Information is delivered to me in a timely manner."

The overall mean on the Family Experience Survey rose from 3.80 in 2022–23 to 3.84 in 2023–24, then slightly declined to 3.81 in 2024–25. This data informs our ongoing efforts to strengthen family engagement and satisfaction. The lowest scoring areas are "I regularly receive feedback from school staff on how well my child is learning" and "I receive positive phone calls, emails, or notes about my child from the school."

Because of the changes in the accountability system over the past three to four years, our data has fluctuated. The only areas in which we have consistently increased our percentage of students scoring Distinguished has been reading and On Demand Writing.

Current State of Academics and Climate and Culture

4. Describe in narrative form the current academic state of the school using precise numbers and percentages as revealed by multiple sources of your most recent outcome data. Cite the source of data used. Consider the following data sources:

• Kentucky Summative Assessments
• Benchmark assessments
• Formative assessments
• Graduation rate
• Progress in achieving English language proficiency
• Student access to high quality instructional resources, advanced placement courses,

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dual credit courses, career and technical education courses, before/after school and summer programs, preschool, full day kindergarten

Example of Current Academic Narratives:

• Thirty-four percent (34%) of students in the achievement gap scored proficient on Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) in reading. Local benchmark data indicates that 32% of all students receive Tier II intervention in reading.

• Fifty-four percent (54%) of our students scored proficient in math on the KSA compared to the state average of 57%. Local formative assessments show 53% of students are on grade level in math.

> On KSA, West Hardin received an overall rating of 56.4 which is a yellow rating. In Reading and Math, our status was 61.8 (yellow). In Science, Social Studies, and Combined Writing, our status was 56.4 (yellow). In School Climate and Safety, our status was 67.4 (yellow).

> Based on IReady diagnostic data from the beginning of the 24-25 school year, 45% of our students are scoring on or above grade level in reading while 29% of students are on or above grade level in math.

5. Describe in narrative form the current climate and culture conditions of the school using precise numbers and percentages as revealed by multiple sources of your most recent data. Cite the source of data used. Consider the following data sources:

• Educator and school staff retention rates
• High-quality professional learning opportunities
• Chronic absenteeism
• School climate
• Behavior
• Staff and student access to mental healthcare
• Family and community involvement

Example of Current Climate and Culture Narratives:

• Teacher attendance rate was 84% for the 2024-2025 academic year. 2023-2024 Impact survey data shows that 71% of staff feel like they belong at our school.

• Fifty-eight percent (58%) of families participated in a family engagement activity during the 2024-2025 school year.

> According to the Kentucky Center for Safe Schools report, students and parents consistently reported that they (or their child) had at least one school staff member they felt comfortable confiding in—whether a teacher, classified staff member, or administrator. Staff interviews echoed this sense of connection, with a recurring theme that West Hardin feels like a family. Staff shared that they enjoy coming to work and feel supported. Survey data from the same report revealed that 97.7% of

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staff believe administration effectively handles discipline issues, and 97.7% also reported that staff morale is good.

Further supporting this positive culture, 96.77% of teachers stated, "I feel a sense of pride when I tell people where I work," and 90.32% agreed, "I feel supported with good processes and the appropriate resources to do my job." Additionally, 87.1% of teachers reported seeing progress toward creating a culture of success for both employees and those we serve.

West Hardin's teacher retention rate for the 2024–2025 school year was 91%, reflecting a stable and committed staff. The average number of teacher absences per month was 45.

Student attendance continues to be a focus area, and recent data shows encouraging growth. The overall student attendance rate was 92.8% in 2022–2023, 92.44% in 2023–2024, and increased to 93.06% in 2024–2025—surpassing the school's goal of 92.9%. Already in the first two months of the current school year, the average daily attendance rate has reached 95.48%, indicating continued improvement and momentum.

West Hardin is committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of all students and staff. The school has two full-time guidance counselors, a full-time nurse, and access to a nurse practitioner through the district. Additionally, a licensed therapist is available through a partnership with Cumberland Family Medical Center, Inc. Through 10 contracted partners, 100% of students and staff have access to mental health resources.

All staff have been fully trained in Project-Based Learning (PBL) through the New Tech Network. This training is actively applied in classrooms, where teachers design engaging, authentic, and rigorous learning experiences for students. In addition, Hardin County Schools recently completed its Portrait of a Learner, and West Hardin students are now being immersed in the competencies and indicators that help them connect their learning to real-world applications across a variety of experiences.

Family and community involvement continues to grow. In the 2024–2025 school year, 68 families attended the Student Showcase and Goal-Setting Event, where students led conversations about their learning and progress. PTSA membership has also doubled since its inception, reflecting increased family investment in the school community.

Strengths

6. Plainly state, using precise numbers and percentages revealed by current data, the strengths of the school.

Example:

• We have active partnerships with twelve community organizations and businesses.

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• Eighty-three percent (83%) of certified staff have participated in high-quality professional learning through the Kentucky Reading Academies.

Overall, West Hardin's KSA rating was 56.4 (yellow). For middle schools in our county, our score was the second highest rating. Our school excelled across the board, outperforming both the district and state in every tested area!

When we examine our data over the past three years, it's clear that we're making steady, long-term growth compared to our performance in 2021-22. The 2022-23 school year saw exceptionally high scores, which slightly skews our progress graph, making the 2023-24 results look like a slight dip. However, when we view this from a long-term perspective, we see consistent improvement in every area except science. This trend shows that, overall, we're moving forward and building on our strengths each year, despite last year's unusually high performance.

Student attendance has steadily improved: 92.8% in 2022–2023, 92.44% in 2023–2024, and 93.06% in 2024–2025—surpassing our schoolwide goal of 92.9%. In the first two months of the current school year, average daily attendance reached 95.48%.

The school provides comprehensive mental health support: 100% of students and staff have access to services through 10 contracted partners. On-site support includes two full-time guidance counselors, one Family Resource and Youth Service Center Coordinator, a full-time nurse, and access to a district nurse practitioner and licensed therapist.

Leverages/Assets

7. Explain how the district will utilize its strengths and leverages, including community resources and assets (i.e., colleges, community partnerships, businesses, industry, etc.) to improve areas for improvement listed above.

Examples:
• We will coordinate efforts with our community partners to meet the behavior needs of more students.
• We will utilize the knowledge gained from the Kentucky Reading Academies to develop a reading action plan to target students in our achievement gap groups.
  • We will leverage our partnership with Cumberland Family Medical Center, Inc. and our 10 contracted mental health providers to continue reducing chronic absenteeism by addressing underlying wellness and engagement barriers for students.
  • We will use our Project-Based Learning training from New Tech Network to design interdisciplinary units that target science achievement, the only area not showing consistent growth in recent years.
  • We will build on our Portrait of a Learner work by collaborating with local businesses and community organizations to create real-world learning experiences that reinforce student competencies and increase engagement.

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- We will continue to use Pear Assessment's disaggregated data tools to identify and support students in underperforming subgroups, including those in special education and economically disadvantaged populations.
- We will expand our family engagement efforts by partnering with PTSA and community organizations to host additional data nights and showcase events, building on the success of our 2024–2025 goal-setting event attended by 68 families.
- We will work with local colleges, businesses, and career partners—including EC3—to provide enrichment opportunities that align with our Portrait of a Learner competencies. With 43 career pathways available to students at the high school level, we are intentionally preparing students to make informed choices about their futures. Through our career exploration class, We Build It Better course and the use of Individualized Learning Plans, students are guided to connect their strengths, interests, and academic progress to real-world opportunities. These tools help ensure that students see the relevance of their learning and are equipped to pursue meaningful postsecondary goals.

Evaluate the Teaching and Learning Environment

Consider the processes, practices and conditions evident in the teaching and learning environment as identified in the six Key Core Work Processes outlined below:

KCWP 1: Design and Deploy Standards
KCWP 2: Design and Deliver Instruction
KCWP 3: Design and Deliver Assessment Literacy
KCWP 4: Review, Analyze and Apply Data Results
KCWP 5: Design, Align and Deliver Support Processes
KCWP 6: Establish Learning Environment and Culture

8a. KCWP 1: Design and Deploy Standards

Schools continually assess, review, and revise school curricula to support the assurance that all students have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for future success.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

- ● **No**
- ○ Yes

COMMENTS

NA

8b. KCWP 2: Design and Deliver Instruction

Instructional programs include consistent implementation of evidence-based instructional practices essential for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional competencies that are aligned to Kentucky Academic Standards and current research.

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Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

    ○ No

    ● **Yes**

    <u>**COMMENTS**</u>

We are in our second year of implementing a new curriculum that is fully aligned to the Kentucky Academic Standards. Instructional pacing guides and unit plans are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment and rigor across all content areas. All staff have been trained in Project-Based Learning (PBL) through the New Tech Network. Teachers will use this training to design authentic, interdisciplinary tasks that promote critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world application. With the most recent data, West Hardin will continue to focus on growth in the both the areas of reading and math. All students will be provided with at least 45 minutes of enhancement time to work with the IReady MyPath program in order to address the current gap/deficits in reading and math. Students in great need will continue to receive intervention services through KSI/MTSS. We will also offer ESS services to students performing below grade level in reading or math and credit recovery in the form of Saturday School to any student who is failing 2 or more classes.

    8c. KCWP 3: Design and Deliver Assessment Literacy

Schools have a comprehensive, balanced assessment system that provides a variety of evidence to support educational decision making and includes four primary assessment purposes: formative, diagnostic, interim/benchmark, and summative.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

    ○ No

    ● **Yes**

    <u>**COMMENTS**</u>

Formal meetings will occur with students where discussion about assessment data will take place after each IReady benchmark assessment, and students will be given the opportunity to goal set with a teacher or administrator. We will continue to focus on grade level and content assessments and curriculum maps/pacing guides, as well as data analysis. Teachers will collaboratively develop and refine standards-based common assessments using the Pear Assessment platform, which allows for real-time data analysis disaggregated by subgroup (e.g., ethnicity, free/reduced lunch, special education). PLCs will meet biweekly to analyze formative and summative data, adjust instruction, and plan targeted interventions. After each benchmark assessment (administered in August, December, and April), teams will engage in thorough data analysis to identify trends, celebrate growth, and respond to areas of need.

    8d. KCWP 4: Review, Analyze and Apply Data Results

Schools communicate and implement a sustainable system for reviewing, analyzing, and applying data results to ensure a uniform way to elicit, interpret, and act on meaningful

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evidence of student learning.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

- ● **No**
- ○ Yes

COMMENTS

NA

8e. KCWP 5: Design, Align and Deliver Support Processes
Schools establish a framework that organizes systems, data, and practices to promote positive, equitable and inclusive learning experiences for all students.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

- ● **No**
- ○ Yes

COMMENTS

NA

8f. KCWP 6: Establish Learning Environment and Culture
Schools intentionally design the learning environment to be inclusive and accessible for all students within a culture where learning and continued growth is the primary focus and foundation for all actions.

Will this be a focus? **If yes, describe in the Comments. If no, write N/A.**

- ● **No**
- ○ Yes

COMMENTS

NA

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Attachment Summary

Attachment Name	Description	Associated Item(s)